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SUBJECT: MAJOR DRUG SEIZURE NETS INTERNATIONAL TRAFFICKERS AND 142  
KILOS OF COCAINE; URUGUAY AS TRANSIT POINT

REF: BUENOS AIRES 00227

SUMMARY

1. (SBU/NF) SUMMARY: The Uruguayan National Police arrested 11 alleged drug traffickers and seized 142 kilos of cocaine in the third significant bust since 2006. The plane used to transport the cocaine was also seized. DEA Buenos Aires-Southern Cone was actively involved in the investigation and operation, dubbed Razor Wire. While this highlights the growing effectiveness of the Uruguayan drug police, it also demonstrates that Uruguay is becoming a major transit point for drug smuggling. We believe the fact that a known Mexican drug cartel was involved suggests that these drugs may have been intended for the U.S. market. This investigation remains ongoing in Uruguay. Further law enforcement action is also anticipated in Bolivia. END SUMMARY.

OPERATION RAZOR WIRE

2. (SBU/NF) On February 21-22 the Uruguayan National Police arrested Ismail Ruiz-Casillas (a Mexican national) and ten other individuals and seized 142 kilograms of cocaine following a year-long investigation into the drug trafficking activities of the Ismail Ruiz-Casillas organization. Uruguayan and Bolivian police monitored the group's cell phones and investigations by DEA offices in the Southern Cone, Miami FD, SOD and DEA Mexico (and corresponding counterparts) indicated that up to 400 kilograms of cocaine would be smuggled into Uruguay on February 21. Uruguayan police surveilled the arrival of the plane at a clandestine field in the Northern part of Uruguay. Surveillance continued as the alleged traffickers drove the cocaine south to the seaport of Montevideo, where the seizure and arrests were made.

3. (SBU/NF) Uruguayan police also seized and searched the airplane, yielding GPS coordinates of the flight path showing that the plane had flown a Bolivia-Brazil-Paraguay route before landing in Uruguay. The coordinates were passed to the Santa Cruz police and DEA Santa Cruz.

4. (SBU/NF) So far, 11 arrests have been made: five Mexican nationals, two Bolivian pilots, one Uruguayan and three others whose

nationality remains undetermined. Bolivia and Uruguay continue to conduct further investigations related to this seizure.

#### NOTABLE RECENT SEIZURES

15. (SBU/NF) This marks the third significant load of cocaine seized in Uruguay in cooperation with the DEA Buenos Aires-Southern Cone Operations since September 2006:

September 2006: Operation Platinum Fist-ZA-06-0016. Approximately 400 kilos seized in Uruguay in cooperation with DEA Brazil.

August 2007: Operation San Francisco-ZA-07-0025. Approximately 483 kilos seized in Uruguay in cooperation with DEA Brazil.

February 2008: Operation Razor Wire-ZA-07-0052 (ongoing). 142 kilos seized to date in Uruguay in cooperation with DEA Bolivia.

#### COMMENT

16. (SBU/NF) COMMENT: Operation Razor Wire demonstrates the impressive work of the Uruguayan Directorate General for the Repression of the Illicit Drug Trafficking (DGRTID), and its chief Julio Guarteche. The quantity of cocaine seized was substantial, but the successful arrest of known international drug traffickers was more important by far. This and the two previous operations indicate that Uruguay is increasingly becoming a major transit point for international drug trafficking. DEA believes this latest shipment may have been destined for North America, possibly a reaction by the Mexican cartel to interdiction pressure along its traditional routes into the U.S. Post will continue to seek additional resources and training to support the key role of DGRTID in this fight.

BAXTER